

# REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS – DROUGHT

FACT SHEET #2, FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2013

JULY 5, 2013

## NUMBERS AT A GLANCE

**15**

Drought-affected atolls and islands in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI)

Government of RMI (GoRMI) – May 2013

**6,384**

People affected by drought conditions

GoRMI – May 2013

**1,200**

Islands, islets, and atolls that compose RMI

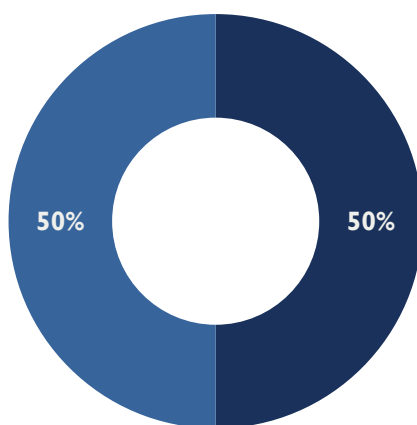
U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) – May 2013

**53,158**

Total population of RMI

GoRMI – 2011

## USAID/OFDA<sup>1</sup> FUNDING BY SECTOR IN FY 2013



■ Water, Sanitation, & Hygiene (WASH)

■ Logistics & Relief Commodities

## HIGHLIGHTS

- The effects of severe drought conditions continue to affect nearly 6,400 people in RMI
- On June 14, U.S. President Barack Obama declared a disaster for RMI, authorizing additional U.S. Government (USG) funding for relief and reconstruction activities
- To date, the USG has provided nearly \$1.3 million to respond to drought-related humanitarian needs in RMI

## HUMANITARIAN FUNDING TO RMI TO DATE IN FY 2013

USAID/OFDA<sup>2</sup>

\$1,259,654

**\$ 1,259,654**

TOTAL USAID ASSISTANCE TO RMI

## KEY DEVELOPMENTS

- Though seasonal rain showers have resumed in northern RMI, nearly 6,400 people in the most severely affected atolls remain in need of humanitarian assistance, particularly access to safe drinking water and food. Drought conditions have depleted freshwater reserves, caused unsafe salinity levels in groundwater, and damaged crops, according to OCHA.
- On June 5, GoRMI President Christopher Loeak requested a U.S. presidential disaster declaration for the northern part of RMI, citing incapacity to provide immediate relief and adequate support to affected populations.
- On June 14, President Obama declared a disaster for RMI under the Compact of Free Association (COFA)<sup>3</sup> between the USG and the GoRMI, authorizing the release of federal funding for emergency relief and reconstruction assistance.
- On June 28, USAID/OFDA deployed a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) to RMI and activated a corresponding D.C.-based Response Management Team (RMT) to help manage the drought response. USAID/OFDA is coordinating USG disaster assistance efforts in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the GoRMI.

<sup>1</sup> USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA)

<sup>2</sup> This funding figure does not include the cost of USAID/OFDA pre-positioned relief commodities distributed in response to RMI drought conditions.

<sup>3</sup> The COFA between the USG and the GoRMI provides the GoRMI with USG economic assistance, defense programs, and other benefits in exchange for USG defense and certain other operating rights in the country, denial of access to RMI territory by other nations, and other agreements.

## CURRENT SITUATION

- The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) reported on July 2 that seasonal rain showers had resumed in northern RMI and weather patterns indicate a return to normal seasonal conditions in drought-affected atolls. Although rain showers will immediately help increase water levels in catchments, NOAA noted that multiple periods of rainfall are necessary to desalinize aquifers, and several months of rainfall are required to improve agricultural conditions in drought-affected areas.
  - Lack of rainfall has resulted in dried-out vegetation and damaged or destroyed staple food crops, such as breadfruit, taro, and bananas, throughout northern RMI. Affected populations currently rely on fish, crabs, and other coastal food sources, as well as commodities provided by the GoRMI, relief agencies, and donors, including the USG, to meet household food needs, according to OCHA.
  - GoRMI officials and other humanitarian actors are traveling to affected atolls to assess humanitarian needs and the status of deployed reverse osmosis units. The majority of the approximately 1,130 severely affected households have relied heavily on reverse osmosis units—which are used to remove salt from seawater—for safe drinking water as the ongoing drought has depleted freshwater reserves. The results of the current assessments will inform the GoRMI and USAID response strategies over the coming months.
  - Drought-affected areas include Ailuk, Aur, Enewetak, Kwajalein, Lae, Likiep, Maloelap, Namu, Rongelap, Ujae, Utirik, Wotho, and Wotje atolls and Lib and Mejit islands.
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## GoRMI RESPONSE

- On May 29, the GoRMI released a new drought response plan covering a period of 90 days, following the release of a 30-day immediate drought response plan on May 20. The new plan requests nearly \$4.7 million to address immediate and near-term drought-related humanitarian needs. Key sectors include food security, health, logistics, and WASH. The plan also includes repair of rainwater harvesting systems and related WASH infrastructure, provision of rainwater catchment tanks for each household, assessment of drought impacts on groundwater and salinity levels, and improvement of drought management practices.
  - On June 7, the GoRMI extended the state of disaster declaration for northern RMI—originally issued on May 8—for an additional 30 days. The declaration, which must be renewed every 30 days, expands the GoRMI's access to national emergency resources, USG assistance, and other international support.
  - In mid-June, the GoRMI completed a two-week operation to deliver food and water to households residing in affected atolls. The GoRMI originally planned to distribute food and water for four weeks, but reduced the distribution period to two weeks due to a shortage of available supplies.
  - The GoRMI Ministry of Health (MoH) has deployed health teams and medical supplies to all drought-affected islands and atolls, according to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). In addition to delivering direct health care services, MoH health teams are working to prevent disease outbreaks and distributing relief items, such as hygiene kits and water containers.
  - The GoRMI Emergency Operations Center in Majuro, with participation from U.N. and government agencies, continues to coordinate national relief efforts, including the management of air and sea transport needed to deliver safe drinking water, food, and other relief commodities to affected populations.
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## USG RESPONSE

- In response to President Obama's June 14 disaster declaration, USAID—in collaboration with FEMA and the GoRMI—developed a \$3.4 million RMI Disaster Relief and Reconstruction Plan (DRRP), outlining USAID's proposed activities for the first 30 days of the response. The DRRP includes response activities in agriculture and food security, health, and WASH, as well as logistics operations, which are complex given the number and locations of affected islands and atolls.

- USAID/OFDA, using funding from FEMA<sup>4</sup>, recently provided an initial \$1 million to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), USAID's primary implementing partner in RMI, to initiate immediate response activities, including the transport of humanitarian commodities and personnel to affected areas and support for the emergency distribution of water and food to drought-affected populations.
- On June 28, USAID/OFDA deployed a DART to RMI and activated a corresponding D.C.-based RMT to help manage the drought response. USG response personnel deployed include two logisticians, a humanitarian assistance advisor to the military, and communications, agriculture and food security, and WASH specialists, as well as a reconstruction specialist from USAID/Philippines and three FEMA representatives. USG staff are working with the RMI National Disaster Committee and other donors on a coordinated and effective disaster response.
- Under the COFA, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is tasked with providing food assistance to disaster-affected populations in the event of a U.S. presidential disaster declaration. Accordingly, FNS has procured food commodities through the U.S. Department of Defense in Guam. The initial shipment of food commodities is currently en route to Majuro, with an estimated arrival date in mid-July.
- To meet immediate food needs, USAID/OFDA has authorized IOM to procure food items locally for the most severely affected atolls using funding provided to USAID/OFDA by FEMA. The first food shipment departed Majuro by boat on July 3.
- USAID/OFDA has donated a total of 12 reverse osmosis units to the GoRMI to increase water availability in drought-affected areas of northern RMI, including Lib and Mejit islands and Ailuk, Lae, Likiep, Namu, and Wotho atolls. In addition, USAID/OFDA has loaned the GoRMI an additional eight units to enhance the drought response, four of which IOM has distributed from its USAID-funded warehouse in Majuro. IOM is currently preparing a distribution plan for the remaining four units.

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## OTHER HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

- Australian Foreign Minister Bob Carr announced on June 12 that the Government of Australia (GoA) planned to provide RMI with an additional \$385,000 to support the transport of water and emergency food to drought-affected areas, as well as repairs to existing desalination equipment to provide a longer-term solution for access to safe drinking water. In early May, the GoA provided RMI with \$100,000 in emergency funding in response to a request for assistance from the GoRMI.
- On June 18, U.N. Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos approved a \$1 million grant from the U.N. Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) for the RMI drought response. Managed by IOM, the funding is intended to help meet immediate humanitarian needs, primarily through WASH assistance and support for logistics operations. The CERF is a stand-by humanitarian fund established by the U.N. to enable more timely and reliable humanitarian assistance to those affected by rapid-onset emergencies.
- An IFRC National Volunteer Group based in RMI, with the agreement of the GoRMI, recently requested financial and resource support from the IFRC to assist approximately 3,400 drought-affected people on six atolls. In response, IFRC released an emergency appeal seeking more than \$850,000 in cash, services, and/or in-kind donations. The appeal prioritizes the delivery of relief items, as well as early recovery WASH assistance.

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<sup>4</sup> Under the COFA, FEMA provides funds to USAID/OFDA to implement humanitarian response programs in coordination with FEMA and the GoRMI.

## CONTEXT

- In November 2008, USAID assumed responsibility for disaster response and reconstruction in RMI and the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) from FEMA, reflecting the transition of FSM and RMI from U.S.-administered trust territories to independent countries. USAID and FEMA developed an Operational Blueprint to provide a framework for USG disaster response and reconstruction in the two nations, under which USAID maintains FEMA's previous commitment to supplement host government efforts as necessary to provide humanitarian assistance in the aftermath of significant disasters. USAID/OFDA collaborates closely with FEMA, as well as with USAID/Philippines and USAID's Asia Bureau, to implement programs in FSM and RMI.
- USAID also maintains a full-time presence in FSM and RMI through a Disaster Assistance Coordinator (DAC). Located in Majuro and working as a member of the U.S. Embassy country teams in FSM and RMI, the DAC serves as a liaison to host governments and coordinates USG relief activities in FSM and RMI. USAID recently established a position for a Reconstruction Assistance Coordinator based in USAID/Philippines, who helps USAID fulfill the reconstruction component of its mandate as specified in the Operational Blueprint.
- Since January, drier-than-normal weather conditions have prevailed in northern RMI, where the majority of freshwater supplies depend on rainfall for replenishment. On May 3, U.S. Ambassador Thomas Hart Armbruster declared a disaster due to humanitarian needs resulting from the drought.

### USAID HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO RMI PROVIDED IN FY 2013<sup>1</sup>

| IMPLEMENTING PARTNER   | ACTIVITY                               | LOCATION       | AMOUNT             |
|--|--|----------------|--------------------|
| USAID/OFDA <sup>2</sup>                                      |  |                |                    |
| IOM  | Logistics and Relief Commodities, WASH | Affected Areas | \$1,100,000        |
|  | Staff Travel and Administrative Costs  |                | \$159,654          |
| <b>TOTAL USAID/OFDA ASSISTANCE</b>                           |  |                | <b>\$1,259,654</b> |
| <b>TOTAL USAID HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO RMI IN FY 2013</b> |  |                | <b>\$1,259,654</b> |

<sup>1</sup> Year of funding indicates the date of commitment or obligation, not appropriation, of funds.

<sup>2</sup> USAID/OFDA funding represents actual or obligated amounts as of July 5, 2013.

## PUBLIC DONATION INFORMATION

- The most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making cash contributions to humanitarian organizations that are conducting relief operations. A list of humanitarian organizations that are accepting cash donations for response efforts in RMI may be found at [www.interaction.org](http://www.interaction.org).
- USAID encourages cash donations because they allow aid professionals to procure the exact items needed (often in the affected region); reduce the burden on scarce resources (such as transportation routes, staff time, and warehouse space); can be transferred very quickly and without transportation costs; support the economy of the disaster-stricken region; and ensure culturally, dietary, and environmentally appropriate assistance.
- More information can be found at:
  - The Center for International Disaster Information: [www.cidi.org](http://www.cidi.org) or +1.202.821.1999.
  - Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int).

USAID/OFDA bulletins appear on the USAID website at

<http://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/working-crises-and-conflict/responding-times-crisis/where-we-work>